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AUTHOR Friesen, Sharon
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ABSTRACT

This resource guide aims to assist parents, other adults, and the school in providing a stronger continuum of educational opportunities for children at home and in the school. The introductory section provides background information on parent involvement. Section 2 discusses the physical, emotional/social, intellectual, and creative development of children of four through eight years of age. Section 3 explores ways parents at home can encourage their child's development. Specific attention is given to ways to encourage self-concept development, language development, sensory awareness, physical development, concept development, and a positive attitude toward school. Section 4 discusses topics related to parent involvement in the school, including types of involvement, involvement in the school, a volunteer's code of ethics, involvement in advisory and decision making roles, and benefits of involvement for the child, the parent, the teacher, and the school. Included in the guide are a list of resources for parent involvement and a brief bibliography of related materials. (RH)

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# Bridges to Learning

## A Guide to Parent Involvement

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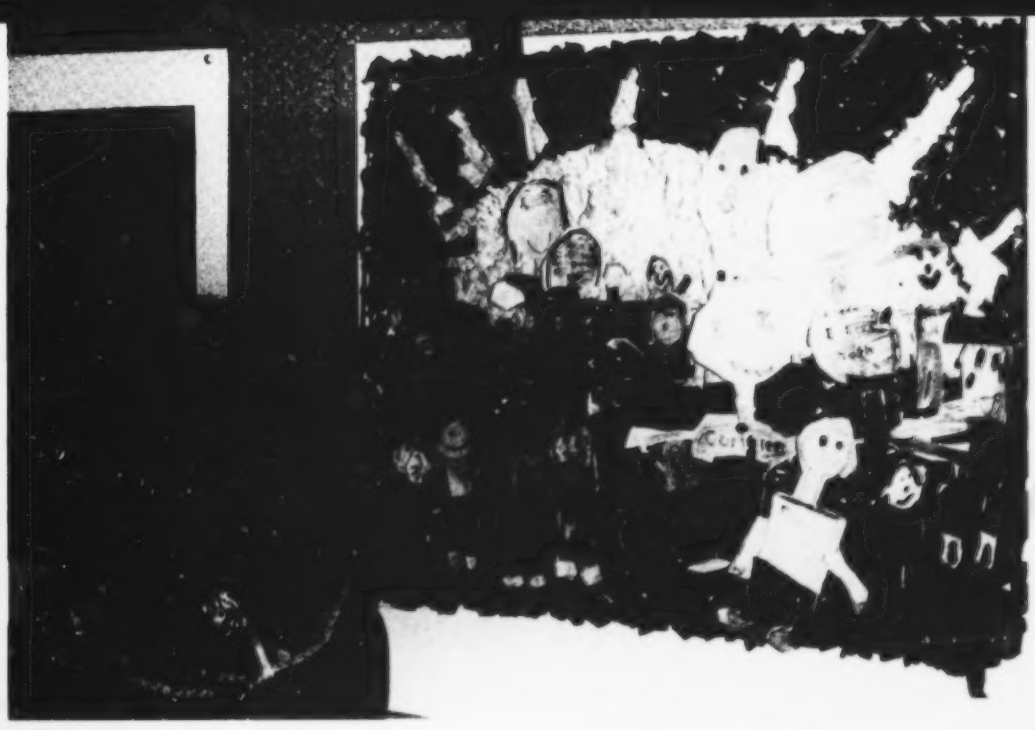

**Time**
- Provide opportunities for your child to assist you with planning a schedule of daily activities.
- Provide a calendar on which events can be planned and noted. Encourage your child to use the calendar to find past, present, and future events.

**Problem Solve**
- Encourage your child to develop problem-solving skills through patterning. Patterns help children learn about sequence and order. A pattern can be started with dishes, beads, rocks, buttons, nails, colored straws or pipe cleaners. You can start the pattern and then encourage your child to continue it.
- Encourage discussion about problems. What caused it? How can we solve it in the future?
- Encourage your child's involvement in "What if" games. These may help your child to anticipate results. "What happens if we leave water in a dish for a week?"

**Water Play**
- Encourage your child to experiment with different objects in water. What floats or sinks? Why do certain objects float and others sink? Add salt, what happens?

**Pets**
- Encourage your child to assume some of the responsibility of caring for a pet if you have one or plan to get one. The responsibility of caring for a pet, learning about its needs, and discovering the special joy of possession provide an abundance of learning activities for a child.

**Plants**
- Encourage your child to experiment with growing plants. Plants that grow quickly such as beans, carrot tops, avocado pits, grass seeds, or pineapple tops are usually successful.

**Trips**
- Involve your child in helping you plan excursions. These may include trips that centre around daily activities such as going to the store, or more involved trips such as the family vacation.

### Ways to Encourage a Positive Attitude Towards School

- Encourage your child to view school as something to look forward to and enjoy.
- Show your child that you care about what he is doing in school. This may be accomplished by activities such as looking at and commenting favourably on his work samples, attending parent/teacher conferences, volunteering to work in the school, talking with the teacher when you have concerns or praise.
- Provide encouragement to your child regarding his schooling.
- Show a real interest in school. The parents' attitude is usually the child's. Recognize that as a parent you are an important, vital link between the two main socializing agents for your child, the home and the school. You and the teacher are partners in the important job of teaching your child. An interested, relaxed, involved parent is a most valuable partner.

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## Background

(from Program Policy Manual, Third Edition, Alberta Education, 1985)

"Early Childhood Services (ECS) is a voluntary program directed at the integration of educational, health, recreational and social services for young children below the age of school entrance. The program is also available for an initial or a second year to developmentally immature children who are of compulsory age for basic education but who, **in the opinion of parents or guardians, staff, and school board,** would benefit from an ECS program. Operators, in co-operation with parents, staff, and Community Services, are to develop, implement, and evaluate programs intended to strengthen the sense of dignity and self-worth in the child. Recognition is to be given to the belief that human development is a continuous, sequential and interactive process. Parents are considered to be primary agents in the child's development, and through participation in that development, are afforded opportunities for personal growth. Play is considered central to the learning that occurs as children interact with their environment. Results, with respect to the development of children, should be determined in terms of individual growth rather than by comparison with the growth of others."

## Policy

The policy of Alberta Education is stated as follows:

"For the purposes of enhancing individual abilities and future educational opportunities, Alberta Education supports the provision of integrated services, through parents, staff and community, that address the developmental needs of each child before entrance into basic education."

## Preface

In the implementation of this policy, Alberta Education has issued a handbook under the authority of the Minister of Education, pursuant to Section 6 of the Department of Education Act. The handbook is entitled *Early Childhood Services: Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions*. Parent involvement is given as high a profile in the handbook as it enjoys in the background and the policy statement. In order to assess the impact of parent involvement in the education of their children, a study entitled *Articulation Linkages: Children and Parents in Early/Basic Education*, was conducted in 1984 and the report was distributed throughout the province. To assist parents in the development of their children at home and at school, a second document, *Human Development: The Early Years* has also been published and distributed. Within the above context, this publication, *Bridges to Learning*, has been prepared with the following purposes in mind:

1. To assist parents in providing developmental opportunities for their children in the home.
2. To encourage parent involvement in their child's education, beginning when the child enrols in Early Childhood Services (ECS) and continuing on to the primary grades.
3. To enable parents to be advocates not only for their own children, but for all children in the community.

Although reference is made to "parents" throughout this document, we recognize that other adults may also be involved in supporting young children's educational programs. As a resource guide, *Bridges to Learning* is a document designed to assist parents, other adults, and the school in providing a stronger continuum of educational opportunities for children at home and in the school. Alberta Education is presently preparing a policy on ECS/Primary articulation. Articulation refers to a process which enables continuity of significant educational experiences for children. The articulation policy is intended to provide for greater continuity in the administration, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and parent involvement in programs for young children in ECS and basic education.

This publication is intended primarily for parents, and has been written to address the interests and concerns of parents as they provide developmental opportunities for the child in the home and school. The author of this publication, Sharon Friesen, developed her initial interest in parent involvement in education through her participation as a parent in an ECS program. She has sought to maintain a strong parental perspective in writing this document. An editorial committee consisting of teachers, parents, and school administrators assisted Mrs. Friesen in the preparation of the resource guide. It is our belief that this publication will prove to have significant value for parents as they seek to enhance the growth of their children in intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and creative dimensions.

**Note:** In order to provide a balanced use of sex-related terms, we have alternated the use of "he" and "she" in the various sections of the resource guide.

# Parent Involvement: **A Background**

Most of the credit for the thrust in parent involvement in our schools must go to Early Childhood Services, Alberta Education. From its beginning in 1973, Early Childhood Services recognized that a child experiences a greater level of success in an educational setting if the goals and attitudes held by both the home and the school are similar. Early Childhood Services still recognizes that similar goals for home and school are fundamental, a position reflected in *Philosophy, Goals, and Program Dimensions* which states that "parents have the right and the responsibility to be involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs for their children and themselves (page 1)".

Parent involvement is "any activity which brings parents into a special relationship with their child, the child's teacher, or community resource persons through which the parents are enabled to assist their child's development and to experience personal growth". (*Philosophy, Goals, and Program Dimensions*, page 14). Involvement at this level results in direct benefits for the child, the parents, and the school. Involved parents report that they are more aware of what is happening at school, gain greater respect for teachers, and become more positive towards education in general (*Articulation Linkages, 1984*). Parents also report that they benefit personally by gaining greater confidence in themselves and their abilities. When parents are directly involved in the educational process, two-way communication between home and school is enhanced. Open communication develops an empathetic understanding of each other's worlds, and parents and teachers find that they are both working towards the same goal — the best education for the child.

Upon seeing the success of parent involvement in Early Childhood Services, many educators and parents are now actively promoting parent involvement in the primary grades as well. The process of learning to work together so that benefits can be realized is a gradual one, as trust and confidence develop over time. By devoting time and energies to developing a partnership, educators and parents are discovering that they generate a powerful learning environment. This is supported by research which demonstrates that improvements occur when parents and educators cooperate: the self-esteem of children and parents is enhanced, and children's motivation and achievement are increased. (Honig, 1979; Lyons, Robbins, & Smith, 1982; Moles, 1982; Safran, 1974.)

Parent involvement programs will continue to develop and expand as educators and parents reach out to each other for a partnership in the education of children. The continuity created between home and school in Early Childhood Services can continue for the child in the primary grades. Parents can indeed be viewed as co-partners in education. Together, educators and parents can build bridges to learning.

# Parent Involvement:
# Child Development
## (Ages 4 to 8)

No manual for parents is complete without a section on child development. As educators within the home, parents want and need to know more about the development of their school-age child. Once a child enters school, guiding the development of that child becomes a cooperative endeavor between the home and the school. This section is intended to present an overview of child development from the ages of four through eight.

Rather than provide a list of the various traits of the young child at each age level, an attempt will be made to illustrate some of the characteristics common to this developmental stage. This is important because no two children are alike in their development; each is unique. For example, to state that at age six a child will begin to develop permanent teeth — when in fact it may happen as early as age five or not until age seven — encourages unrealistic expectations of parents for their child. A child will start to grow permanent teeth when ready, and this generally occurs between the ages of four to eight. The rate at which a child develops varies and is the result of both inherited characteristics and environment, with the steps or sequence of development following a definite pattern.

The ages between four and eight are an exciting time for children and parents. This is a time of transitions, a time when children go to school. It is a time when children become more independent. During this time of development children continue to play an active role in making sense of their world. This is why there is still an emphasis on the development of the whole child; the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and creative dimensions. These developmental areas are difficult to separate because they are all related to and dependent upon one another.

## Physical Development

The physical development of an individual depends on factors present at birth and determined by family characteristics or genes of the parents. It is also dependent upon nutrition, the food which the mother ate during pregnancy, and the kinds of food the child is accustomed to eat now. Immunization or lack of it, medical attention when required, and sufficient physical activity in a stimulating environment are other factors which have a bearing on normal physical development. In no other area of growth and development are differences so obvious as in that of physical growth and development.

The ages between four and eight are also a time of relatively slow growth compared with the growth that took place from birth to this stage. Permanent teeth may begin to appear; the body lengthens; legs and arms grow longer, allowing for better balance and the ability to move rhythmically; and hands and feet grow larger. Children at this stage have good general control of their large muscles. They still require areas in which to climb, skip, walk, jump, and run in order to gain mastery of body skills and coordination. Their small muscles are not as fully developed. Activities which develop small muscle control — those in the arms, hands and fingers — are drawing, cutting, putting puzzles together, woodworking, painting, tying, etc. By age eight a child generally has good control of both the large and the small muscles. The ability to combine information received from the sense organs with a physical response is also developing at this stage; examples of activities which develop this type of coordinated movement are kicking and catching.

Children in this stage of development tire fairly quickly, as their internal organs have not developed to the point where their bodies can sustain prolonged physical activity. It is important that they have a balanced measure of active and quiet times.

## Emotional and Social Development

Emotional and social development, like physical development, depend on a variety of factors and, of these, the home environment is the most important because children model themselves on their parents and identify with their parents' values and standards of beliefs.

The self-concept children develop depends on the image they have of themselves as individuals. It includes the knowledge and feelings they have about who they are, what they are like, and what they can do. It is crucial that a supportive, challenging, nurturing environment be maintained; one that develops a positive self-concept. Children who feel secure and self-confident accept others more easily. Early Childhood Services' *Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions* states that "A child's self-concept is central to all areas of development. How children perceive and feel about themselves influences, and is influenced by, how each one performs in all areas of development (page 7)". If children are to develop images of themselves as truly adequate individuals, they need experiences that nurture and contribute to their feelings of adequacy and worth.

At this time, peers begin to have an impact on children's development. This is a gradual process, because at age four the child is still at the centre of his world. Children value friendships and enjoy interacting with age-mates. They learn what it means to be a part of the school group and what it means to adjust to the expectations of that group. Children begin to engage in games with rules, and will often invent rules to go with their play. Cooperation of all participating members is expected when children play games with rules.

## Intellectual Development

A Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, is most often mentioned in discussions about the intellectual development of children. His work has had a dramatic effect on our understanding of the characteristics of children's thinking and their acquisition of knowledge. It is Piaget's work that has helped us understand how young children learn. Through his research, educators have come to realize the importance of providing appropriate experiences matched to the developmental level of the child.

Children from the ages four to eight learn better when they experience an actual object or event at the same time the verbal information is presented. We often say that children learn by **doing, experiencing, observing, imitating,** and **exploring**. It is very difficult for a child of this age to understand abstract concepts. By way of example, when the concept of addition is first introduced, children need to work with many concrete materials to develop an understanding of the process of addition. By working with the actual objects, along with verbal explanations and questioning, children develop an understanding that one block and one more block are two blocks. After many of these experiences, children can then understand the symbolic expression, $1 + 1 = 2$. The concrete activities children engage in thus become the basis for abstract and logical thinking.

Many of the experiences Piaget speaks of are developed in play situations. Play is children's work. "Play includes any activity children have freely chosen, is under their control and is not dominated or imposed by an adult (*Philosophy, Goals, and Program Dimensions*, page 3)". Play is essential to children in this stage of development for it creates a total body harmony. Through play children explore, experiment, build relations with ideas, and learn about themselves and others. Play provides the basis on which concepts and skills are built. Following is an example of how a play activity builds concepts and skills: while in the bathtub a child pours water between different sized containers. "The child fills the larger container discovering how many small containers are needed to fill the large one. Straws may be added and the child blows bubbles." (Rachlin et. al., 1984, page 59.) With this activity the child is building concepts of more than, less than, measurement, volume, and space.

Young children are interested in the "here and now", and at age four are just beginning to develop a concept of time. They can now relate to events that have happened and events that will happen in the days to come.

Children's development of the "here and now" is also related to how children perceive the world at large. In this stage of development children have a difficult time understanding events that take place outside their own small circle; their world centers around themselves, their family, and their community.

Language development is an integral part of intellectual development. Children need opportunities to use language, to talk, to listen, to read, and to write. "Language makes available to the child words and concepts that, if they are presented to the child at the right moment, can give new direction to the child's thinking and open up new questions." (Schmidt, 1984, page 15.)

## Creative Development

"Creative thinking is the ability to use past experience to generate new ideas or new combinations of ideas." (*Philosophy, Goals, and Program Dimensions, 1984*, page 12.) Creativity spans the curriculum, from the fine arts to the expressive arts, to innovative thought processes. Children enjoy creating original works of art, inventing new lyrics to familiar songs and poetry, experimenting with different roles and movements in dramatic play, and discovering new solutions to problems. The process of being creative is often more important than the end product. Creativity is encouraged when parents ask questions such as "How did you decide which colors to mix together?". Parents can support their young child's creative development by encouraging the child to continue to ask unusual questions, to be original, and to find alternatives.

# Parent Involvement: **In the Home**

You, as parents, are your child's first and most important "teacher". When your child enters school your parental role does not end, nor does it diminish in value, but rather, your child now has more than one teacher. Your child benefits when his "teachers" work cooperatively in creating learning experiences. Your child's learning is enriched and supported in the home as well as in the school. The experiences you provide for your child in the home have an impact on his learning at school.

You may often feel insecure in knowing how to take advantage of the home setting, routines, and activities to create learning and problem-solving opportunities. Following are some suggestions that you may find helpful; the possibilities are endless. Young children need lots of practice and patient encouragement in their endeavors. Remember, trying together is the important thing, not the accomplishment of a task.

### Ways to Encourage Self-Concept Development

- Accept your child as he or she is. Avoid comparisons between siblings and/or other children. Highlight and value each child's uniqueness and special qualities.
- Develop and reinforce your child's belief in her own worth; for example, by:
    1. expressing love physically (i.e., hugging, kissing, smiling, making eye-contact)
    2. listening and talking to your child
    3. letting your child know you are aware of her strengths and achievements
- Encourage your child to make her own decisions by offering choices and/or helping to clarify alternatives; then support her decisions.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for an important task around the house. Although you may do it better, your child will be proud to have your confidence and trust.
- Present your child with tasks that are possible for her to perform. Help her to succeed, and acknowledge her success.
- Provide plenty of praise and recognition for your child's efforts. Recognize the positive.

## Ways to Encourage Language Development

- Use good speech. You will be the model for your child's language skills.
- Listen to your child. Encourage him to talk about his everyday activities. Be sure your interest is genuine.
- Ask questions to extend your child's oral skills.
- Encourage family conversations.
- Talk to your child during all the activities you share with him. Explain what it is you are doing when he is watching you, and encourage participation.
- Read to your child, or take turns reading to each other. Read every day. Reading gives you some special time together each day, helps your child learn to listen, aids language development, and lets your child know that reading is an enjoyable pastime not just a required skill. The school or public librarian can assist you and your child in choosing good books.
- Read often, and let your child see you reading and writing.
- Encourage your child to take advantage of public and school libraries, and books in the home.
- Provide a special place for your child's books.
- Show interest in what your child is reading. Ask questions, and talk about his reading material.
- Encourage your child to listen to good children's records or tapes. These can be borrowed from the public library.
- Watch TV with your child and use it as the useful tool that it is. Choose programs together and take the time to discuss what you have seen.

## Ways to Encourage Sensory Awareness

Show your child how to sample the world through his five senses (touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting).

**Touching**

- Hide objects inside a box or a paper bag, then have your child try to identify what is hidden inside the box by feeling each object carefully.

**Smelling and Tasting**

- Prepare a lunch with distinct taste, smell, and texture. Have your child shut her eyes and try to identify the foods by taste, smell, or texture.

**Touching, Seeing, Hearing, and Smelling**

- Encourage your child to look, listen, touch, smell and hear everything she can during an unhurried walk with her. You might watch what attracts her and ask how it smells or if it makes a noise.
- Discuss the function of the different services in your community during trips to the grocery store, the post office, the bank, and other facilities.

**Hearing**

- Clap hands and encourage your child to copy by repeating the pattern of your clapping, starting with simple patterns such as clap, clap, pause, clap.
- Encourage careful listening through activities such as whispering a message in your child's ear and having her whisper it back to you.

## Ways to Encourage Physical Development

**Encourage coordination by:**

- Helping with household chores such as carrying parcels, raking leaves, kitchen activities. Keep expectations at the child's level.
- Playing games such as: Simon says, simple ball games, jumping games, animal imitations, making snow or sand angels.
- Sewing. Use a thick needle to string macaroni, buttons, beads, etc.
- Building. This can be any building, using blankets, blocks, scraps of wood or whatever is available.

**Encourage large muscle development by:**

- Providing opportunities for your child to practice walking, stretching, hopping, jumping, pulling, running, leaping, dancing, pushing, skipping.

**Encourage small muscle development by:**

- Providing opportunities for your child to practise buttoning, opening snaps, zippering, coloring, cutting, pasting, completing puzzles, tying shoelaces.

## Ways to Encourage Concept Development

**Classify**

- Encourage your child to help you sort the laundry, lengths of wood, buttons, tools, etc.
- Encourage your child to pick up her toys and sort them into various categories: blocks, cars, books, puzzles, games.

**Number**

- Encourage your child to observe numbers in her environment. For example, telephone dial, calendar, addresses, thermometers, scales, elevator buttons, clocks, television channel changer, numbers on road signs.

**Count and Measure**

- Encourage your child to measure familiar objects using standard (ruler) and non-standard (hands, feet) measures.
- Provide various-size containers for your child into which she may pour quantities of water, sand, dirt.

# Parent Involvement: **In the School**

Successful parent involvement in the school must have the support and the dedication of both educators and parents. Because, however, this coordination of effort may necessitate a major change in the structure of the present education system, there will perhaps be initial stages of anxiety and uncertainty by both educators and parents.

Parental involvement in the school takes time to develop and is most successful when an atmosphere of understanding and mutual trust exists. This type of environment is fostered through open communication between educators and parents, who must reach out to each other, recognizing that schools are much more effective when a partnership in the education of children exists.

## Types of Involvement

There are several levels of parent involvement in the school, ranging from active support in the home to involvement in the classroom, and to effective roles in the decision-making processes and in advisory capacities. The type of involvement may vary as individual needs and capabilities change, as well as those of the school.

- One level of involvement for parents is to support the school program actively in the home. All parents can function at this level, regardless of other constraints they may have in their lives.
- A second level of involvement is for parents to volunteer their services in some capacity in the school. This means that parents can become involved as special resource persons or volunteer to work in the office, library, or classroom, playing an active role under the supervision and direction of a teacher.
- A third level of involvement is for parents to volunteer to take part in decision-making and advisory roles. These parents are involved in planning parent programs and providing input into various school policies by serving on parent advisory committees.

## Involvement in the School

Involvement in the school requires the contribution of services in a supportive role under the supervision and direction of a professional educator. For this to be a satisfying and rewarding experience for the volunteer and the teacher, an understanding of the school's needs and the volunteer's needs must exist.

Within the classroom, the teacher is the decision-maker for the implementation of the educational program. There need not be confusion over "role definition" since the teacher and volunteer have different roles. A classroom volunteer is never expected to perform professional services; the teacher is always responsible for content and method. These include diagnosing children's needs, prescribing instruction, selecting appropriate materials, and evaluating student progress and achievements.

Some suggestions of ways in which volunteers can and do contribute to the school are:

- sharing areas of expertise
- obtaining designated materials for class units
- organizing and supervising a classroom library
- acting as interpreters for non-English-speaking parents
- assisting in the school library
- assisting with computer activities
- preparing learning activities
- supervising and assisting pupils
- checking learning activities
- reading to children
- listening as children read
- writing down stories as children dictate
- mixing paints, preparing clay, cutting paper, for art projects
- supervising group games
- assisting children with their clothing, shoes
- assisting with field trips
- assisting with clerical duties such as typing, filing and sorting, duplicating, and laminating
- preparing bulletin board displays
- preparing posters, charts, booklets
- keeping records (non-confidential)
- assisting in school club activities and co-curricular programs
- assisting or tutoring individual students or small groups of children

For a variety of reasons, some parents will not be able to give time to assist in the classroom, but may nevertheless wish to have some active involvement with the school. These parents might give assistance such as:

- providing material needs (e.g., baking for special functions, beautiful junk)
- assisting in the preparation of learning materials for the teacher (e.g., posters, charts, booklets)

## A Volunteer's Code of Ethics

All volunteers are provided with a code of ethics which they are asked to follow, as these are elements critical to the operation of the school.

1. Respect the confidentiality of the teacher and the children, and refrain from discussing them outside the school situation. If you have any questions or concerns share them with the teacher.
2. Practice tolerance and understanding towards the children and teachers with whom you come into contact. Be sensitive to the teaching role. Strive for acceptance of all the children.
3. Be dependable. If you agree to undertake a task, follow it through by attending at the times and dates arranged. Be realistic about the amount of time you can spend. If you must be late or absent, arrange for an acceptable substitute.

## Involvement in Advisory and Decision-Making Roles

Involvement in advisory and decision-making roles most often involves active participation in parent advisory committees. Parental involvement in one of these organizations may consist of:

- working as a team member, providing input into the educational program
- assisting in setting goals for the school
- assuming a leadership role within the organization
- assisting in initiating, developing, implementing, and evaluating parent programs

Parents sitting on these committees must assume responsibility for providing leadership, not depend solely upon the initiative and leadership of the school administration. It is, however, essential that the school administration be consulted and involved in these groups and their programs.

No two parent advisory committees are exactly alike. It is important to maintain uniqueness because parent committees must meet the needs of the children, school, parents and community they serve. They may, however, have some similar fundamental characteristics and may look to each other for advice.

Parent advisory committees are generally involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of parent programs within a school. Such programs should be planned to meet the identified needs of the parents they serve. It is not enough to have the organizing committee determine, of its own volition, what it thinks parents' needs are or should be; parents must be kept informed and surveyed, either by a form or letter sent to the home or through informal discussion groups.

When planning parent programs, parent committees should ensure that as many parents as possible within the school community have the opportunity to attend. Parents sometimes have needs and responsibilities which may compete with their desire to participate in parent programs. It is wrong to assume that parents who do not actively participate in a parent program in the school are apathetic. Through careful cooperative planning more parents may be able to involve themselves in some part of the program.

It is very important that the parent advisory committee involved in planning and implementing parent programs evaluate each event. To determine how successful an event or special evening was, and how well it met the parents' needs, the parents who participated in the program should be asked to evaluate its effectiveness.

## Benefits of Involvement

Research has demonstrated that six improvements occur when parents are involved in the educational process:

- "improved student attitudes, conduct, and attendance,
- improved classroom performance when parents tutored students,
- better understanding of students' needs,
- increased self-confidence and personal satisfaction for participating parents,
- active parental support of instructional programs, and
- augmented instructional resources."

(Lyons, Robbins, Smith, 1982, page ix).

Along with these improvements, many parents report additional benefits to their children and themselves as a direct result of their involvement. The following list has been compiled from interviews with parents and teachers, and from research literature.

**For the Child**

- enhanced self-esteem
- increased motivation to learn
- enhanced child/parent relationship
- increased achievement level
- enhanced significance of school learning

**For the Parent**

- an opportunity to gain greater insight and confidence into one's own capabilities
- an increased awareness of a parent's impact on a child's development
- an opportunity to gain information about activities which will assist the child's development
- an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the child's learning behavior
- an opportunity to observe the child as he or she relates to peers
- an opportunity to be involved with the child in the child's own setting
- an opportunity to observe and understand what is happening in the classroom
- an understanding of the teacher's goals and viewpoints
- an opportunity to reinforce school skills at home
- an opportunity to meet other parents in the community with children the same age

**For the Teacher**

- an opportunity to discuss the individual needs of the children to be better able to meet these needs
- an opportunity to gain greater insight into and knowledge about the children
- more opportunities for communication, both formal and informal
- an opportunity to draw upon supplemental and often unique adult resources and expertise
- an opportunity to provide a greater number and variety of classroom materials
- a better understanding about the community served by the school

**For the School**

- increased effectiveness of school program
- increased enrichment opportunities
- increased communication between home and school
- increased awareness of the needs of the parents and the community served by the school
- increased public awareness of parents, schools, and community

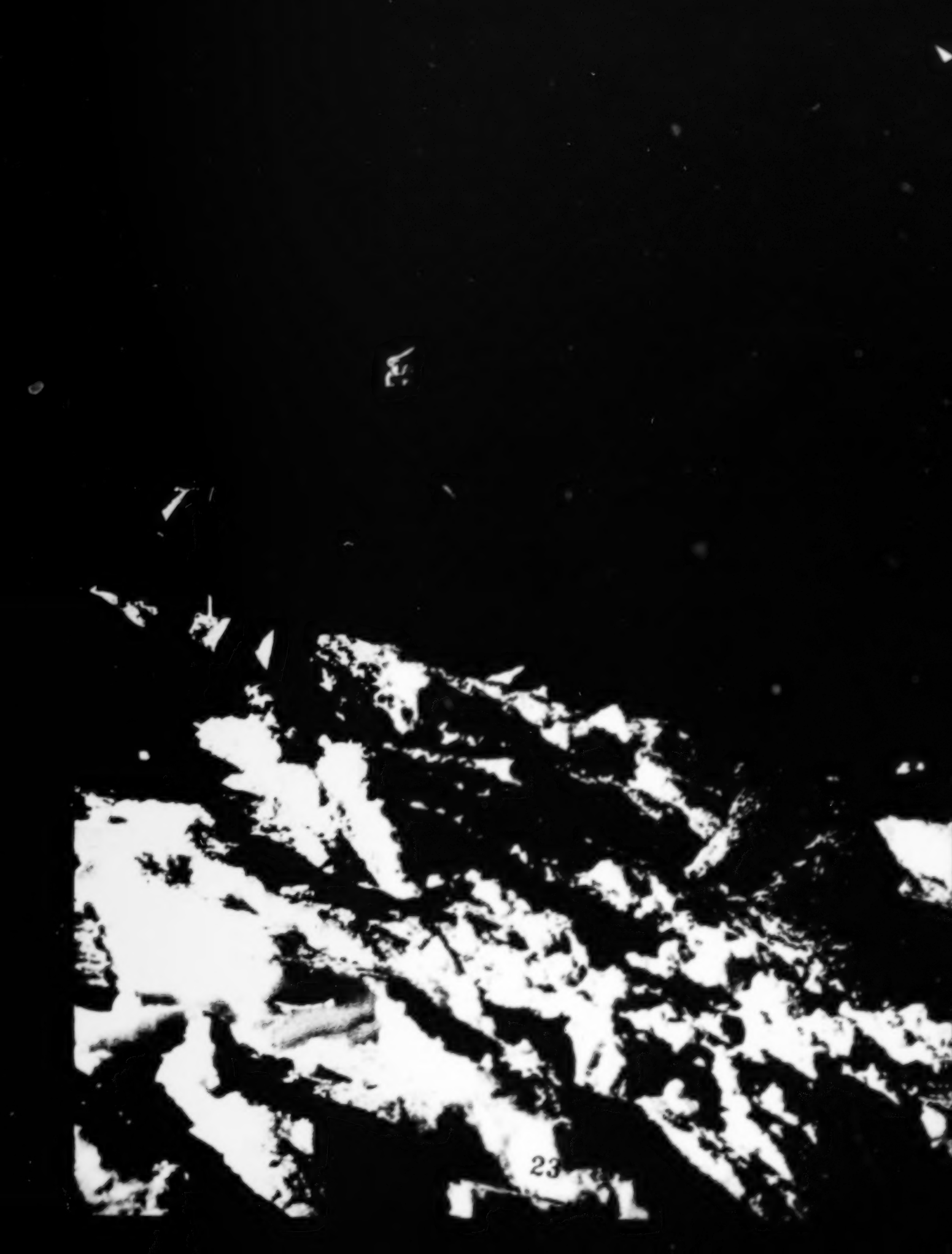
With all the benefits reported by those currently concerned with parent involvement, it is understandable why they actively promote the continuation and expansion of this valuable resource.

Parent involvement is the component that provides continuity for children's home and school experiences. When the home and school complement each other, a powerful learning environment is created. Continuing good communication between school and parents will foster awareness about school programs and the implications of their children's involvement.

A knowledge of child development provides parents with an understanding of how they might be better able to involve their children in significant learning experiences around the home, and helps parents to establish realistic expectations for their children.

By knowing how to take advantage of home settings, routines, and activities, parents are able to create valuable learning experiences for their children. These experiences in the home assist children in their school learning.

Involvement in the home and the school provides parents with an opportunity to be partners in the education of children. When parents and educators are partners in education, benefits are realized not only by the children, but also by parents, teachers and school. The continuity of experiences that parent involvement provides for children lays the foundation on which to build bridges to learning.



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